

IN THE SPECIFICATION

(Page 4, lines 8 and 15):

The commercial sector of the Web has been extensively used for direct sales of travel services. At the consumer or end-user level, systems and methods for conducting e-commerce typically involve a computer running a web browser for accessing web pages from remote servers via the one and only, well-known, Internet. Computerized travel booking services, especially for air travel[[.]] have become more complex with the rise in popularity of the Internet. Not only are there many more sources of services but terms and conditions are increasingly complex. A need to manage the various complexities on a single client computer exists. Sales and ancillary sales support activity (such as ticketing) within the travel industry is typified or dominated by an airline component. Thus the airline component services of the travel industry is paradigmatically used and envisioned in accompanying diagrams. A small number of online services provide a large proportion of air travel fares quotation and ordering for air travel booked by travel agents for clients. There are four such online services[[;]] [[.]] they are known by their trade names, Sabre®, Worldspan®, Galileo®, and Amadeus®. These are collectively and individually known, in the art, as GDS (global distribution system(s)).

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However, the Internet and World Wide Web (“the Web”) have become everyday utilities for many businesses and individuals and often provide cheaper tickets than are available through GDS’s. Under price performance pressure[[.]] travel agents scan the

world wide web for better prices and then purchase tickets over the Internet. The travel agent must then typically enter the purchase into a GDS in order to generate the required accounting records. Often, too, a service charge (profit margin) must be charged separately, rather than a preferred method of bundling or commissions from the supplier. Another problem is that Internet sales can often have complex and unfamiliar terms and conditions with the risk that the agent may purchase a non-refundable fare only to later notice a restriction that makes the fare useless to the client. Since the terms are not presented in a standard way, they are open to misinterpretation. Also, the agent may need authorization to advance credit (usually credit card credit) for the purchase. This can result in a dilemma for the business owner as to how much authority to spend money should be given to the agent since each situation is unique. Thus, the Internet is not as travel agent friendly as the GDS. However, sometimes travel agents must use the Internet to access websites or lose business. Websites are well known in the art.

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Consumer computer systems and methods are well known in the relevant arts. A high level depiction of one embodiment of this invention is shown in Figure 1. Box 101 relates to one or more distributed processing servers which are well understood in the art. One particular such server that has been used to embody the invention is the Excambria™ Web Server 101 which is used as an example herein. The Figure depicts a travel agency client computer network 102 which may contain computer workstations (not shown in Figure 1) that may connect though a router 130 and the Internet 104 to Excambria web server 101. The well known Internet Protocol (IP) is used to

communicate over the Internet which is also well known in the art. Excambria™ Web Server 101 in turn connects via Internet 104 to multiple supplier server computers 110 (two shown, but typically many available). Supplier computers may typically operate as e-commerce websites, exchanging requests and responses by means of Internet oriented protocols such as FTP, HTTP, HTML, XML and/or many others. Travel agency client computer network 102 also connects through a Gateway 120 through a proprietary GDS telecommunication network[[s]] 131 to one of the several GDS suppliers 141 that may be available and which are typically based on mainframe computers. Presently there are four GDS suppliers in total and they are well known in the art.

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When the travel agent and the client select a particular airline flight, the Excambria database 880 provides this information to local area network 884. The local area network 884 then transmits this information to the ticket printer 878 at the travel agency 814 or to the legacy server 808 to have a ticket printed. This choice may be made by the processing station 814 at the travel agency 812. When the ticket is to be printed at the local travel agency 812, the transmission of the request to have the ticket printed at the travel agency is made from the Excambria database 88[[4]][[0]] through the local area network 884 to the ticket printer 878. When the ticket is to be printed at the legacy server 808, the request to have the ticket printed is made from the Excambria database 880 through the local area network 884, the Excambria gateway 874 and the modem 872 to the legacy server 808.

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In addition to the advantages discussed above, the system in Figure 11 provides other advantages, particularly to the travel agent at the travel agency 812. As previously indicated, the airlines, particularly the major airlines listed in the legacy server 808, have been reducing the commissions paid to travel agents for generating tickets for flights on these airlines. The system in Figure 11 provides the travel agents an opportunity to obtain discounted fares from the airlines and to charge a commission on these discounted fares when the travel agent quotes the discounted fares to the client. The travel agent can do this by quoting to the client a single price which includes the discounted fare and the commission. The client profits from this discounted fare (even with the commission added) because the client does not have to pay the established and published fare of the airlines. There is another advantage in the system of Figure 11 to the travel agent. This results from the fact that the travel agent can obtain information from all of the available sources in a minimal amount of time and can have all of this information posted on the display terminal 882 at the same time. This facilitates the selection by the agent of the best flight arrangement for the client in a minimal period of time, this decision being based upon all of the available facts. The system is also advantageous to the airlines because it allows the airlines to ~~[[the]]~~ significantly reduce their cost, particularly their selling and marketing expenses. The system is further advantageous to the efficient airlines because their fares will be below those of the inefficient airlines and this will be readily apparent on the split screen 500 in Figure 5.

(Page 36, line 18):

It will be appreciated that the web servers 990, 992 and 994 are shown in Figure 12 separately from the web servers 888-898 (even ~~members~~ numbers only) in Figure 11 only for purposes of convenience. The web servers associated with the Excambria web server 900 in Figures 11 and 13 may constitute any one of any combination of the web servers shown in Figures 11 and 13. Furthermore, the use of the system shown in Figures 11 and 12 is not limited to the web servers shown in Figures 11 and 13. This will be obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art.